

Playback: Switchfoot delivers

Continued from Page H8

rendition of the song, though it does admittedly seem out of place on this otherwise metal blasting disc.

As for Moreno's band, Deftones rip it up plenty while riding a thick riff on "My Own Summer," and trip through feedback-laced frenzy in "Nosebleed."

Of all the noise-makers here – and there are plenty – Stone Sour arguably crank things up the most on the head-banging, fist-pumping "Reborn." Deadsy go to another extreme with a relatively obligatory, acoustic-based turn on the CD's finale "Carrying Over."

Other contributors include the vastly underrated 10 Years, a group which features the best singer to be found here in Jesse Hasek, and the foreboding Dir en grey, who deliver relatively forgettable 2 selections.

The CD is being released simultaneously with a separately sold DVD featuring plenty of concert footage as well as backstage material and interviews.

Switchfoot, "Oh! Gravity." (Columbia) ★★★★★

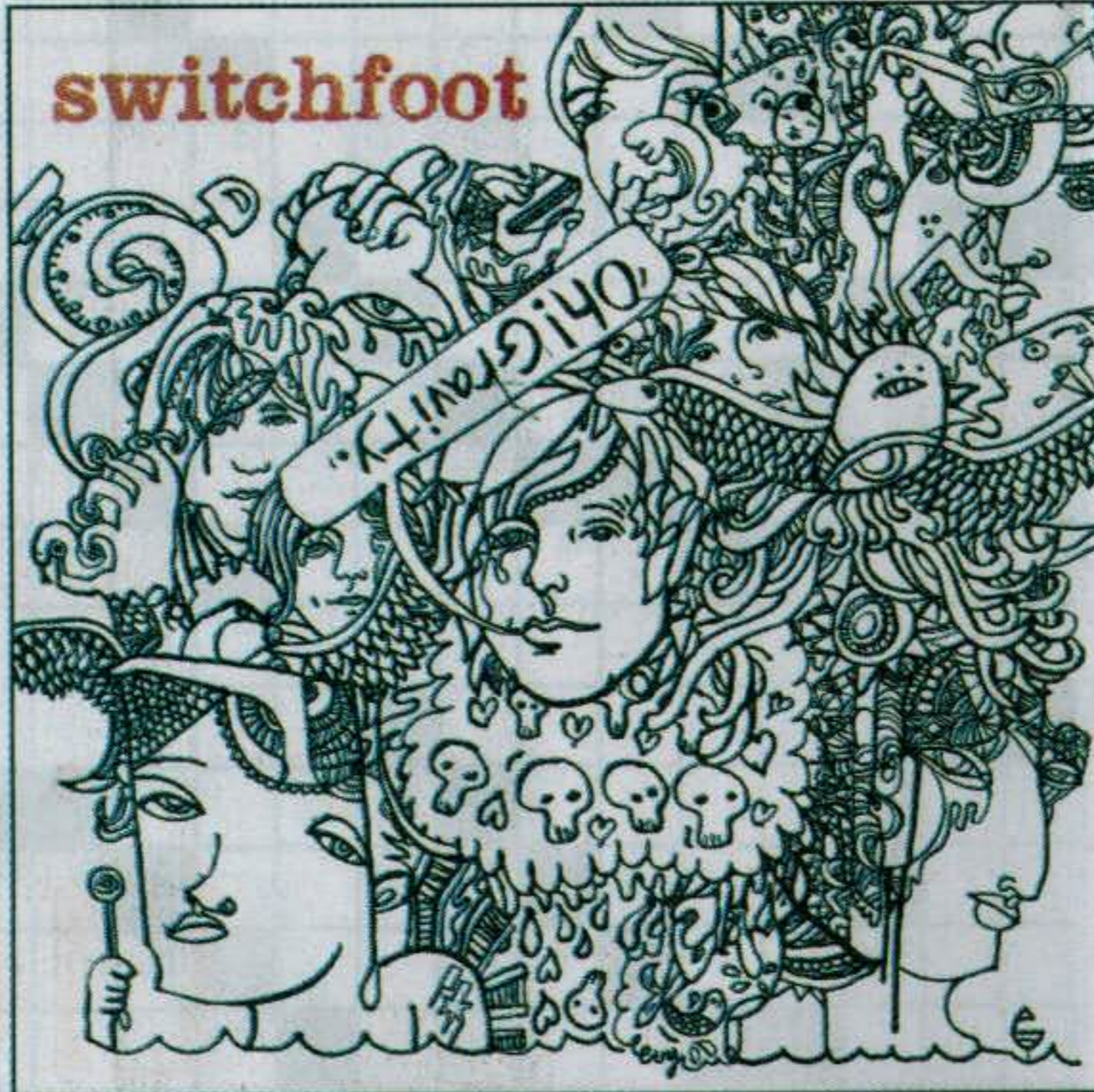
Who says that searing rock 'n' roll bands can't pump out melodies as infectious as their richly-layered buzz saw guitars?

Switchfoot have managed to straddle that fine line for years, and while melodic rock may be passé in some circles, it sure sounds right on this, the San Diego band's sixth studio album.

Frontman and chief songwriter Jon Foreman steers his troupe through 12 dynamic tracks that are far more intricately arranged than they might sound on first listen. A perfect example is the stellar exotica of "Circles," with its intriguing backing vocals, acoustic traces and striking guitar arrangement.

The title song is driven by a killer hook, and other tracks like the Led Zeppelin-flavored "Dirty Second Hands," the punk-ish "Amateur Lovers," and the dream-weaving, lyrically fascinating "Faust, Midas and Myself," reveal Foreman's continuing growth as a writer.

"Oh! Gravity." was produced by Tim Palmer, who's worked with U2 among others, and it was executive produced by another U2 cohort, Steve Lillyw-



Switchfoot pumps out the music in its new album, "Oh! Gravity."

hite. So it's not surprising that at least one of these songs, "Awakening," has a definite U2 flavor, but otherwise, Switchfoot blend influences as diverse as Motown and the Smiths successfully throughout this engaging, exhilarating, ambitious work.

Terry Adams and Steve Ferguson, "Louisville Sluggers" (Clang) ★★★

Well here's a refreshing reunion.

Longtime friends and NRBQ founding members Terry Adams and Steve Ferguson are back together on this 13-track offering, the first time in more than 30 years that they've collaborated on an entire album.

Ferguson, who left NRBQ early in their career, is a simply amazing guitarist, who's released a couple of exceptional solo albums, while avant-garde keyboardist Adams complements him superbly throughout "Louisville Sluggers."

The album features old tunes like "Mule Skinner Blues," "Please Don't Talk About Me When I'm Gone," and "Hi Heeled Sneakers," along with solid takes of lesser known fare such as the duet "Dutchess County Jail," and Ferguson's intricate original "Ichabod."

NRBQ have been on sabbatical for way too long now, but

hopefully this will get the train rolling again. In the meantime, "Louisville Sluggers," is the perfect album to tide one over.

Tony Joe White, "Uncovered" (Swamp) ★★★

You've got to be in the mood for Tony Joe White's soulful, simmering, swampy brand of country blues.

The Louisiana native best known for writing "Polk Salad Annie," has a deeply distinctive voice, and he almost whispers his way through his latest album. It's filled with some big name guest stars, including Eric Clapton, Mark Knopfler and the late Waylon Jennings, the latter whose duet with White on "Shakin' The Blues," marked one of his final recording sessions.

Clapton contributes some tasty, subdued vocals and guitar to "Did Somebody Make a Fool Out of You," while "Uncovered," features other highlights including the White/J.J. Cale collaboration "Louvela," and a truly beautiful remake of one of White's classics, the ever-mesmerizing "Rainy Night in Georgia."

Rarities and reissues

John Hiatt, "Performance Classics: Live at the Hiatt,"

(Hip-O Select) ★★★★★½

Once only available as a promo, this 1993 concert from The Forum in London, finds John Hiatt and his band the Guilty Dogs hitting hard with material from his latest release at the time, "Perfectly Good Guitar," as well as other highlights from throughout his career.

It starts with a passionate, acoustic based, "Through Your Hands," while Hiatt and company proceed through a 10-song set sparked by a beautifully sung "Feels Like Rain," the grungy, feedback-laced "Something Wild," and Hiatt classics including "Perfectly Good Guitar," and "Slow Turning."

One of America's best songwriters, Hiatt's as consistent as they come, and the commercial release of this vintage recording is a most welcome one.

DVD spotlight

NRBQ, "Derybytown: Live 1982," (MVD) ★★★★★½

Let's get the downside of this newly released NRBQ DVD out of the way right away: The sound quality is decent, but a little tinny and the performance itself is only about 45 minutes long.

Yet there's so much great music here, that it's tough to quibble. This is NRBQ & The Whole Wheat Horns in their prime, with the classic lineup that featured Al Anderson on guitar. Filmed in 1982 during a show in Louisville, Ky., the band has an absolute rave-up.

Kicking in with the barn-burning Anderson showcase "That's All," it includes such Q fan faves as Joey Spampinato's "I Love Her, She Loves Me," a hilarious version of "The Dummy Songs" featuring the horn players harmonizing with drummer Tom Ardolino, and solid rockers include "Green Lights," "Honey Hush," and "That's Neat, That's Nice."

Bonus features include a 1981 TV appearance featuring the band doing "Me & The Boys," and the 2000 promo film "Atsa My Band."

Al Anderson will perform at the Iron Horse Music Hall in Northampton on Dec. 31 at 7 and 10 p.m.

Rating Scale: ★ (poor) to ★★★★★ (a classic)